

By Philip Rucker

On Capitol Hill, there's one thing you can almost always take to the bank: The minority party's agenda won't become *the* agenda.

Yet on Wednesday, leaders of the minority parties in the Senate and House introduced their jobs agendas in spirited fashion. Senate Republicans and House Democrats sought to demonstrate that, unlike the parties that control their respective chambers, they are focused chiefly on one of the top concerns of American voters: creating jobs and stimulating economic growth.

Neither plan is likely to become law, with some key elements regarded as non-starters by the majority parties. But that's not necessarily the point. Wednesday's rollouts seemed to have been more about positioning the minority parties to show they are doing something about jobs — and to crow that those in the majority, by comparison, are doing nothing.

"It's been 120 days of the Republican majority, and we haven't seen a jobs bill yet," Rep. James E. Clyburn (S.C.), the No. 3 House Democrat, told reporters. "Maybe they need some ideas."

The 28 other House Democrats flanking Clyburn, of course, came prepared to offer some in the form of a "Make It in America" agenda. Among them: new programs to train workers in advanced manufacturing, investments in transportation infrastructure, research and development tax credits, and savings accounts for small-business start-ups.

“This agenda is founded on the conviction that when we make more products in America, more families will be able to make it in America,” said Minority Whip Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.), architect of the plan.

Across the Rotunda, five Republicans took to the Senate floor to explain some ideas of their own, packaged simply as the “Senate Republican Jobs Plan.” Among them: require a statutory spending limit for the government, reduce individual and corporate tax rates, prohibit the federal regulation of greenhouse gases and repeal President Obama’s health-care law.

“We need to get the American economy back on track,” said Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), who crafted the agenda, which he called a series of “common-sense proposals.”

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.) said the plan would “put this proverbial straitjacket on Congress” and is “refocusing us on the number-one issue in America today.”

The charge from both sides of the Capitol was that their political rivals are asleep at the wheel.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), introducing his party’s jobs agenda, said the Obama administration seems to be throwing “a big wet blanket over job creation in America.”

“The red tape continues to hold American small businesses hostage,” Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) said. “There is so much uncertainty about the rules and regulations coming out of this town that it is paralyzing the rest of the country.”

House Democrats accused the new Republican majority of ignoring jobs while focusing intensely on cutting government spending, rolling back federal regulations and repealing the health-care law.

“After four months, in the House, we have not yet considered a jobs bill — not one,” Hoyer said in an interview Wednesday. “And we think that’s not consistent with what the American people

are saying.”

House Republicans have argued that their work to cut government spending — as well as GOP measures that passed the House and were voted down in the Senate, such as repealing the health-care law — helps create private-sector jobs.

If the House Democrats’ “Make It in America” plan sounds familiar, that’s because it’s essentially a repackaging of last year’s “Make It in America” agenda — one that failed to convince enough voters in the 2010 midterms that Democrats were doing enough to create jobs.